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AUTHOR Berzonsky, Michael D.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Adolescent psychologists readily acknowledge the role that peer expectations and pressures may play in causing youth to act in ways that conflict with previously assimilated attitudes and beliefs. However, minimal research has been focused on self-presentational behavior during adolescence. This study was designed to determine whether the internalization of a public self-presentation varied with identity status. Late adolescent undergraduate students (N=124) who were pretested on identity status and sociability participated in a self-presentation experiment. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of six conditions involving three types of presentations: face-to-face, written questionnaire, or anonymous--crosscut by positive or negative impression conditions. Results indicated that subjects internalized positive presentations and resisted internalizing negative ones. Results further indicated that subjects with varying identity statuses exhibited differences in susceptibility, resistance, and reactions to encounters.
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Identity Status, Self-Presentations, and Self-Conceptions

Michael D. Berzonsky

State University of New York, Cortland

Barry Schlenker

Kevin McKillop, Jr.

University of Florida

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ABSTRACT

An experiment to determine if the internalization of a public self-presentation varied with identity status was conducted. Late adolescents, pretested on identity status and sociability, participated in a self-presentation experiment. They were randomly assigned to one of 6 conditions involving three types of presentations--face-to-face, written questionnaire, or anonymous--crosscut by positive or negative impression conditions. A 2 (positive-negative) by 3 (presentation type) ANOVA on sociability change scores revealed that subjects internalized positive presentations and resisted internalizing negative ones. Identity Status X Internalization (change scores plus a constant) correlations indicated that Moratoriums showed increased susceptibility in the negative conditions. Foreclosures displayed enhanced resistance but only in the positive conditions. Status X Internalization correlations within the face-to-face conditions alone, indicated that Diffusions internalized the actual positive encounter and tended to be influenced by the negative encounter. The possibility of identity status differences in the process by which self-presentations influence self-conceptions is considered.

IDENTITY STATUS, SELF-PRESENTATIONS, AND SELF-CONCEPTIONS

Adolescent psychologists readily acknowledge the role that peer expectations and pressures may play in causing youth to act in ways that conflict with previously assimilated attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Berzonsky, 1988; Biddle, Bank, & Marlin, 1980; Brown, 1982). Yet, minimal research attention has been focused on self-presentational behavior during adolescence. Moreover, the few efforts to date have been concerned with the organismic and situational factors that influence how adolescents present themselves (e.g., Elkind, 1980; Elliott, 1982), rather than the effect public self-expressions may have on a youth's private self-views.

Recent social-psychological research indicates that private self-conceptions may be influenced by self-presentation behaviors (see Schlenker, 1985). For instance, Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, and Skelton (1981, Study 3) had subjects play the role of an applicant in a simulated job interview. Subjects were instructed to present themselves in either a self-enhancing (positive) or self-deprecating (negative) fashion. A 2 (positive vs. negative role-playing) by 2 (choice vs. no choice) by 2 (self-referenced vs. scripted presentation) design was employed. Self-referenced presentations were improvised by the subjects. Their responses were then used by yoked subjects in scripted conditions. Internalization was operationalized as pretest-posttest changes on a self-esteem index. Subjects who were self-deprecating

showed decreased self-esteem, provided they had freely chosen to participate. Self-deprecating subjects in the no-choice conditions showed no internalization. Self-enhancing subjects displayed elevated self-esteem, but only in the self-referenced (improvisation) conditions. Jones et al. (1981) offered a dual-process explanation of these presentation-induced carry-over effects: Positive changes resulted from self inferences (Bem, 1972), whereas the arousal of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) produced the negative changes. Two different views of self-conceptions are involved.

Self-views have been conceptualized in differing ways, some of which seem to be contradictory. One position (e.g., Bem, 1972) maintains that self-conceptions exist in a variable state of flux; they result from rather than cause social interactions.

Individuals come to 'know' their own attitudes, emotions and other internal states partially L; inferring them from observations of their own overt behavior and/or the circumstances in which this behavior occurs. Thus, to the extent that internal cues are weak, ambiguous, or uninterpretable, the individual is in the same position as an outside observer...(Bem, 1972, p.2).

According to the biased-scanning version of self-perception offered by Jones et al. (1981), role-playing increases the salience of particular self-views and makes them more accessible in memory. Subsequent self-appraisals on the self-esteem measure

would, therefore, tend to be biased in the direction of the self-presentation. Personally improvised positive behaviors would most likely produce this effect.

An alternate view is that self-conceptions are firmly structured and relatively enduring; they determine rather than result from social interactions. Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) is aroused when individuals present themselves in self-incongruent ways. According to Wicklund & Brehm (1976), feeling personally accountable (having a choice) for self-discrepant behavior with potentially negative consequences is a necessary condition for cognitive dissonance. Thus, Jones et al. (1981) suggested that dissonance created by freely chosen self-discrepant negative presentations resulted in deflated self-esteem.

In addition, drawing on findings by Fazio, Zanna, & Cooper (1977), Jones et al. (1981) speculated that dissonance would be aroused when a presentation fell within an individual's latitude of rejection, but that self-perception processes would result when behaviors fell within a subject's latitude of acceptance. Self-attitudes, beliefs, conceptions, etc. can be dimensionalized in terms of personally acceptable, objectionable, and noncommittal zones (see Hovland, Harvey, & Sherif, 1957). Behaviors within the acceptable and noncommittal range produce changes in self-appraisals via assimilative processes. Contrast effects result when behavior falls in the latitude of rejection, and dissonance will be aroused if personal responsibility is assumed. Recent research is consistent with this latitude-of-

acceptance/rejection account (Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986; Trudeau, 1986).

The literature on identity formation indicates that adolescents differ in the firmness of their personal commitments and the stability of their self-conceptions (see Berzonsky, 1981; 1986; Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1982). According to Marcia's (1966) identity-status paradigm, four identity outcomes or statuses can be distinguished by simultaneously considering the reported presence or absence of firm self commitments and active self-exploration crises. (1) Diffusions are not firmly committed and not involved in self exploration. (2) Moratoriums are uncommitted but they are actively involved in self examination. (3) Foreclosures have firm definitive commitments that have been formed (internalized) without personal evaluation. (4) Achievers have formed commitments after a period of personal crisis. Identity status, thus, may be associated with global individual differences in latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and noncommitment.

The present experiment was designed to ascertain whether the extent to which a self presentation was internalized would be related to individual differences in identity status. In general, subjects who "choose" to present themselves in a self-representative positive way should display evidence of internalization; favorable behavior would generally fall within their latitude of acceptance and self-inferences would occur. A negative role one "chooses" to play would generally tend to fall in the latitude of rejection and arouse cognitive dissonance,

however. Since dissonance may be resolved by means other than changing one's self-beliefs (e.g., counterarguing), subjects may resist internalizing a negative role-playing experience (see Festinger, 1957). Differences in these effects were expected to vary with the firmness of one's global personal commitments and self-relevant attitudes as operationalized by identity status. Specifically, because of presumed differences in rejection latitudes uncommitted youth, Moratoriums and Diffusions, were expected to display greater internalization of a public self-expression than more firmly committed youth, Achievers and Foreclosures. Personal involvement increases the latitude of rejection (Sherif & Sherif, 1967). Within these groups, it was hypothesized that Foreclosures would show increased resistance due to the lack of self exploration, whereas ongoing self exploration would make Moratoriums most susceptible.

Method

Subjects. One hundred and twenty four late adolescents (undergraduates at the University of Florida) who had been pretested on measures of identity status (Grotevant & Adams, 1984) and sociability (Cheek & Buss, 1981), participated in a self-presentation experiment: role playing an applicant for a "simulated job interview" (Jones, et al., 1981). Complete data were available for 110 subjects.

Presentation conditions. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of six conditions. They were instructed to create either a positive or negative impression of their "sociability"--ostensibly a critical quality for the "job" they were being

interviewed for--in one of three presentation conditions: (1) A face-to-face interview where the "interviewer" (a confederate) presumably believed the subject was actually applying for a job as a research assistant; (2) a written questionnaire that presumably would be read by an interviewer; and (3) an anonymous written questionnaire presumably designed to obtain group norms.

Interview context. The cover story was that the study was being run in conjunction with a graduate course on interviewing and assessment techniques, and that the simulated interviews were designed to have graduate students practice relevant skills. All subjects were given a choice "to help us out" (none refused). The interviews consisted of a series of questions designed to assess sociability. The questions were identical in all three presentation conditions. Thus, the "publicness" of the presentation was varied--face-to-face, written, anonymous--while the content was held constant. Impressions were manipulated by instructing the subjects to present themselves in the "best possible (or a negative) light" by exaggerating their strengths and down playing their weakness (or vice versa) while not being "outrageous, silly or clearly untruthful". Following the presentation, subjects completed a packet of posttest measures including the sociability scale and manipulation checks: debriefing followed.

Results

Manipulation checks revealed that subjects instructed to create a positive impression gave more sociable responses in the interviews and later reported that they were more sociable during

the experimental sessions than did subjects in the negative-presentation conditions.

A 2 (negative vs. positive) X 3 (type of presentation format) ANOVA on the sociability change scores revealed only a main effect for positive vs. negative presentations, $F(1,118)=9.36$, $p<.01$. Subjects in the positive conditions showed significantly greater increases in sociability self-appraisals. Thus subjects tended to internalize positive presentations and to resist internalizing negative ones.

To ascertain if internalization was related to identity status, Status X Internalization (posttest-pretest change scores plus a constant) correlations were calculated separately within the combined positive and negative presentation conditions (see Table 1). As hypothesized Moratoriums showed increased susceptibility, but only in the negative conditions, $r(55) = -.27$, $p<.05$). Foreclosures displayed enhanced resistance but only in the positive conditions, $r(51) = -.31$, $p<.05$. No other significant relationships were found.

Insert Table 1 about here

Contrary to prediction, an uncommitted state of self-diffusion was unrelated to internalization. Research indicates Diffusions tend to operate in a situation-specific manner (see Berzonsky, 1986; 1987; Greenwald & Breckler, 1985). Since immediate consequences would be minimal in the written and anonymous interview conditions, Status X Internalization

correlations within the positive and negative face-to-face conditions alone were calculated (see Table 2). Diffuseness was related to increased sociability following an actual positive encounter [$r(16) = .48, p < .05$] and inversely but nonsignificantly related following a negative encounter, $r(15) = -.22, p > .10$. Although no other correlations were significant, Moratoriums tended to internalize both actual presentations: Positive face-to-face presentation, $r(16) = .18, ns.$; Negative presentation, $r(15) = -.18, ns.$ The Status X Internalization correlations within all 6 experimental conditions are presented in Table 2.

 Insert Table 2 about here

Identity status classifications. An attempt was made to classify the subjects according to "pure" status types. According to the criteria specified by Adams, Shea, and Fitch (1979), the sample was composed of 17 Achievers, 12 Foreclosures, 8 Moratoriums, and 11 Diffusions. The remainder of the subjects was categorized as mixed or undifferentiated types. Given the exploratory nature of the present experiment, a 2 (negative vs. positive) by 5 (4 statuses and mixed) ANOVA was performed on the sociability change scores, even though the N in 8 of the 10 cells was quite small. Only a significant main effect for presentation condition was found. The mean internalization scores for the four status types (see Table 3) at least suggest a tendency for uncommitted individuals to be susceptible to self-presentation effects. Interestingly, the five Foreclosures in the negative-

impression conditions show evidence of a "boomerang" effect; their self-appraisals changed in a direction opposite to the self-presentation.

 Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion

As predicted, Moratoriums showed a marked tendency to internalize negative self-presentations. In the positive conditions, however, there was general tendency among all subjects to internalize, and a moratorium state of noncommitment did not enhance this tendency. Identity diffuseness was also related to internalization, but only in the actual face-to-face conditions. As expected subjects who held foreclosed commitments displayed a marked tendency to resist internalizing their role playing, but only in the positive conditions where internalization was the normal response. Interestingly this resistance occurred only in the anonymous presentation condition. Nonsignificant tendencies for Foreclosures to internalize positive presentations were obtained in the two conditions where they could be held personally accountable (see Table 2).

These data do not provide a definitive basis for resolving process-relevant issues. However, it seems reasonable to speculate that the process by which public self-presentations influence private self-conceptions differs by identity status.

Internalization and Self-Reflection

Uncommitted Moratoriums, for instance, may have quite narrow

latitudes of rejection on specific personality dimensions, thereby increasing the likelihood of presentation-congruent self-perceptions. Another consideration is the habitual self-reflection characteristic of Moratoriums.

Wilson, Dunn, Bybee, Hyman, and Rotondo (1984, Study 3) used a reasons-analysis condition to manipulate self-reflection. Dating couples, randomly assigned to the experimental condition, were instructed to "list" and "analyze" the reasons why their relationship with their dating partner was the way it was. The reasons were then rated according to the positiveness expressed about the relationship. Control subjects did not receive the reasons-analysis instructions. All subjects completed a dating-adjustment scale. A long-term behavioral measure of dating adjustment was subsequently obtained: about 37 weeks after the initial session the couples were contacted and asked if they were still dating. The positivity expressed in the reasons-analysis condition was significantly correlated with self-reported dating adjustment ($r=.46$). However, the relationship between long-term breaking up and dating-adjustment as reported by Control subjects was .56, but only .08 in the self-reflection condition. These findings suggest that the dating-adjustment reports of the experimental subjects were influenced (biased) by the prior reasons analysis; there was an internalization effect. However, the self-attitudes that resulted from this process of self-reflection were less accurate, vis-a-vis the long-term behavioral criterion, than they would have been without the self analysis.

This account, of course, is consistent with the biased-

Scanning-of-memory version of self-perception offered by Jones et al. (1981). However, self-presentations may bias various steps in the information-processing sequence. For instance, attention or encoding may be selectively altered by the experience. Or during self-reflection the elaborating, rehearsing, and interpreting of previously experienced events may produce the sorts of biased self-reports found by Wilson et al. (1984). It should be noted that some studies do report increased Self-Report X Behavior correlations among subjects experimentally induced to be self-aware (e.g., Froming, Walker, & Lopyan, 1982) and among subjects dispositionally high in private self-consciousness (e.g., Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978). Wilson et al. (1984) note that there may be a major distinction between observing one's thoughts and attitudes and attempting to interpret and analyze them. In addition, the extent to which the self-reflecting individual has a firm set of commitments may be a relevant consideration: A wide latitude of acceptance or noncommitment as well as self-reflection may be relevant. The more definitive commitment structure associated with self-reflective Achievers may serve to insulate them from such short-term internalization effects.

Internalization and Diffuseness

Diffusions may be especially responsive to situational affective cues. Berzonsky (1986) found diffuseness to be significantly related to acting and other-directedness as indexed by Snyder's (1974) measure of self-monitoring. Since immediate personal consequences would be minimal in the written and anonymous conditions, internalization would be limited. In an

actual public setting, however, highly diffused youth may be attending to the impression they are making and the feedback they are receiving. Such self-monitoring activity would influence the information that is encoded and available in memory. A selective retrieval of this salient self-relevant information would tend to occur if they are subsequently asked to make self judgments. The tendency to monitor their ongoing behavior, however, may vary with the instrumental value of the setting. Authorities or even peers perceived to have high status or power might cause a diffuse youth to respond deliberately in a tactically assertive manner (Tedeschi & Norman, 1985).

Greenwald and Breckler (1985) present an ego-task analysis for the diffuse self. They suggest that anonymity may be a situational inducer of this orientation. In addition, identity diffuseness may provide an dispositional measure of the extent to which this orientation is employed when an individual is accountable but guided by hedonic concerns.

Internalization and Foreclosed Commitments

Subjects who held foreclosed commitments showed a marked tendency to resist internalizing their role playing, but only in the positive conditions where internalization was the normal reaction. It is possible that dissonance (Wicklund & Brehm, 1976) rather than self-perception processes are induced when self-presentations conflict with firmly held self-views.

Counterarguing which increases resistance may then occur, especially if self views have not been personally scrutinized.

This may have been the general reaction in the negative

impression conditions. Thus, resistance to internalizing a negative presentation was not enhanced by foreclosed commitments.

Finding that Foreclosures showed significant resistance only in the anonymous condition (see Table 2) tends to argue against an intrapersonal dissonance account. An alternative possibility is that rigidly inflexible Foreclosures perceived the self-presentation instructions as restricting their freedom to behave as they choose. As a result they experienced reactance (Brehm, 1966). Given their strong normative orientation and other-directedness (see Marcia, 1980), they did not attempt to reestablish that freedom in conditions where they could be held personally accountable.

The Nature of Internalization

Internalization in the present investigation was operationalized as posttest-pretest change scores in sociability. However, as Kelman (1958) has pointed out responses indicative of attitude changes can occur for different reasons. Three processes may be distinguished on the basis of the range of subsequent situations in which the "new" attitudes will be voiced and/or relevant behaviors expressed. Compliance involves conforming to attain particular rewards or avoid specific punishments; it is an instrumental situation-specific approach. This orientation should be associated with identity diffusion (see Berzonsky, 1988; Greenwald & Breckler, 1985). Identification results from a satisfying self-defining relationship with a significant other. Attitudes and behaviors are adopted in order to gain and maintain the approval. Internalization, in contrast

to the other two processes, involves intrapersonal revisions in the individual's belief or attitude system. Truly internalized changes in self-attitudes would be expected to influence behavior across a wide variety of situations independent of changes in the immediate hedonic value of the behavior or the potential surveillance by a particular source or authority (see also Hoffman, 1977). It is unlikely that short-term self-presentation manipulations such as the ones utilized in the present study produce internalization in the sense of cognitive restructuring.

Specific Versus General Self-Views

Identity status as operationalized in the present study involves obtaining self-reported assessments on a variety of self dimensions (e.g., occupational, religious, and sex-role views), and then summing these components to arrive at a global identity-status score. The attitude-change measure, in contrast, was specific to the self-presentation manipulation. There is no guarantee, for example, that foreclosed youth as indexed by the global status measure were foreclosed about their sociability or that sociability was a salient and/or important dimension within their identity structure. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) convincingly argue that behavior-attitude correspondence depends on whether or not both are assessed at a similar level of specificity. Global attitudinal measures are unlikely to correlate with measures of specific behavior. However, attitudinal measures about specific behaviors directed at a specified target within a particular environmental context and time frame are more apt to be related

to behavior. In future attempts to account for self-presentation effects on private self-attitudes, the nature of the subjects' commitments and self-exploration about the specific target behaviors should be considered.

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TABLE 1
Correlations Between Identity-Status Scores and
Sociability-Change Scores within Positive and
Negative Self-Presentation Conditions Combined

<u>COMBINED PRESENTATION CONDITIONS</u>		
<u>IDENTITY STATUS</u>	<u>POSITIVE PRESENTATION(N=53)</u>	<u>NEGATIVE PRESENTATION(N=57)</u>
Diffusion	.01	-.11
Achiever	-.04	-.06
Moratorium	-.12	-.27*
Foreclosure	-.31*	-.05

*p<.05

TABLE 2
Status X Internalization Correlations Within
the Three Presentation Conditions

PRESENTATION		STATUS SCORES			
<u>CONDITION</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>MORATORIUMS</u>	<u>DIFFUSIONS</u>	<u>ACHIEVERS</u>	<u>FORECLOSURES</u>
<u>FACE-TO-FACE</u>					
Positive	18	+.18	+.48*	-.22	+.25
Negative	17	-.18	-.22	+.08	+.04
<u>WRITTEN INTERVIEW</u>					
Positive	19	+.07	+.09	-.06	+.09
Negative	20	-.54**	-.38	-.16	-.08
<u>ANONYMOUS</u>					
Positive	16	-.32	-.26	+.04	-.80**
Negative	20	-.18	+.19	-.03	-.19

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 3
Mean Changes in Sociability Self-Appraisals as a
Function of Identity Status and Impression Condition

<u>IDENTITY STATUS</u>	<u>IMPRESSION CONDITIONS</u>	
	<u>NEGATIVE</u>	<u>POSITIVE</u>
Diffusions	0.00 (4)	+6.86 (7)
Moratoriums	-3.00 (4)	+2.50 (4)
Achievers	+0.10 (10)	+0.14 (7)
Foreclosures	+1.60 (5)	+1.43 (7)

Cell N in parentheses